

bucks, whether it means putting in the right kind of lightbulbs or meters on their washers and dryers so they can figure out when to run them, whether it is more fuel-efficient cars. They want to do something differently. They are ready in my State to embrace conservation as a way to save money for their families.

The time is now for Congress to take strong steps toward creating a bold energy policy. American families are depending on us.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MCCASKILL: I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, pursuant to previous order, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will stand in recess until 3:45 p.m.

Thereupon, at 2:28 p.m., the Senate recessed until 3:46 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. NELSON of Florida).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Republicans control the time until 4 p.m., the Democrats control the next 30 minutes, the Republicans control the following 30 minutes, and the Senate continue to alternate control of 30 minute blocks of time thereafter.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Now, Mr. President, I understand Senator DOMENICI wishes also to say a few words. As far as I am concerned—

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I was hoping our leader would be here because he wanted some of this 15 minutes and I was thinking I could get in on part of it and I would not be here all afternoon. I do not have a long speech.

I say to the Senator, I understand he might.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Yes. Mr. President, I intend to use the first Democratic block of 30 minutes.

Mr. DOMENICI. Right.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. But if Senator DOMENICI wishes to speak in the first Republican 15 minutes, and if he goes over for a certain amount of time, I am perfectly happy to yield to him. He is a very distinguished Senator.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I say to the Senator, thank you so much. I am going to proceed on our time and

see what happens with our leader. If he arrives, I will, obviously, yield to him. I will sit down and quickly get out of the way.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, it is nice to be here with you in the chair, since we are discussing issues that are very important, of which you have been a part for a while around here.

First of all, I wish to talk for a minute about the good news. The good news is that crude oil prices have gone down \$16 a barrel in 3 days. That is a bigger drop in the prices of crude oil in history in terms of actual dollars. One of those 3 days it was an \$8 drop. I do not know what this bodes for the future, but today it looks good, it sounds good, and it ought to make us feel good.

What we ought to do is something positive that will have a chance of showing the world; that is, the world that is buying and selling oil and buying and trading oil futures on the market, that there is going to be more oil coming on because the United States has awakened; we have decided that after 27 years of being asleep. We have all this property called the continental offshore, which is owned by the people of our country, and for 27 years we kept all but small portions of it under lock and key. We had decided it was not worth opening that to drilling, even in modern days, when we have the cleanest and best way to go into deep waters and drill for oil. With oil spills being at a minimum, we kept it locked up.

The year before last, we passed a bill that started the process of opening parts of this great valuable offshore owned by our people. Yes, the President of the United States waited around for us to act and finally decided he would lift the Executive ban, the Presidential moratorium that was on 85 percent of the offshore that has been locked up.

Make no bones about it, now, when people say we have already let a lot of that land out to bid, 85 percent of the offshore—85 percent of the offshore—was under lock and key by moratorium until the President lifted the Executive ban. We now have imposed, on that same 85 percent, millions and millions of acres of offshore property.

Now we have the situation where, come the first day of October, the Congress will have to act to put on another 1-year moratorium; the moratorium of Congress is 1 year at a time. We will have to act to put it on or there will be no moratorium, and it will be open for leases pursuant to the law of the land.

This morning, I attended a workshop held by the Energy Committee to discuss the price of oil. We had two leading experts, and we were very fortunate, except that I would say we have heard about enough from experts, and we have talked enough about the prob-

lem. We ought to do something within the next couple weeks.

But at this workshop was Dan Yergin, chairman of Cambridge Energy Research Associates, publisher of a very popular book on oil. He was accompanied by Roger Diwan of PFC Energy. Their message to us this morning, with many Senators asking questions, coming in and out of the room, was the same as I have been hearing from leading economists for the last several weeks. What did they say? Supply and demand problems are the reason why gas prices are so high, why crude oil prices are so high.

The majority leader stopped by our workshop this morning to talk about the bill he has introduced today on speculation. He said that while he understood that speculation was not the only problem, he thought it was a big part of it and we should start there. Well, obviously, he controls how we start, so perhaps we will start with speculation. I, for one, think speculation is not nearly the problem of supply and demand, it is not nearly the problem of opening more property we own for drilling. I think that is the real problem: to put more of that out to the oil operators of the country and get started on some real new production.

I am puzzled by the decision our leader has made about going first with speculation, antispeculation statutes. I am not against looking at that, but if there is something we can do to increase transparency, that is fine. But why would we start by addressing problems when the experts tell us they are not the real problem?

What do the experts say? I will share with you a few comments of what they say.

David Yergin, a great expert, a very fluent man:

The rise in oil prices can be explained by basic economic factors, such as limited growth in supplies in recent years, a weakening dollar, a global surge in energy demand, and a string of production disruptions in countries such as Nigeria.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke:

There is speculation, but speculation, under most circumstances, is a positive thing. It provides liquidity and allows people to hedge their risks. And it provides price discovery. It can help allocate oil availability over time, depending on the pattern of future prices and so on.

Warren Buffett, chairman of Berkshire Hathaway:

It's not speculation, it's supply and demand. We don't have excess capacity in the world anymore, and that's what you're seeing in oil prices.

So why would we start with speculation, instead of supply and demand? Eighty-five percent of the continental U.S. lands offshore are being locked up by Congress; that is, we have a prohibition. The most conservative estimates of how much oil is in the Atlantic and Pacific offshore is 14 billion barrels. Now, I actually think that is totally wrong. I think we have many times that, perhaps as much as three times